

**Part 2 – Careers and Lifestyle**

# First Steps to Employability

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Through this document, I aim to provide a written account of some of my endeavours as first-year Economics student at UEA, whilst attempting to provide a degree of insight of such efforts to other first-year students in the ECO School.

Amongst a few of my cohorts, I have noticed that the term “Employability” often connotes quite a daunting transition for former sixth-form students to make. In actual fact, it can be as fun, or boring, rigorous, or light as you’re willing to make it. In my opinion, many students in contemporary society see a degree as a commodity. A commodity in the sense that the degree is an object with some use value in the long-run – Perhaps an investment in time and money to maximise ones future income. This rational approach to ones studies, from my experience, may not necessarily guide a student towards developing the important life skills that make a person “Employable”.

## Becoming “Employable”

In this section I aim to provide some useful information with regard to “standing out” in the application process for an



internship. It's no surprise that a vast proportion of students who apply for internships at Banks and Accountancy firms for example, struggle to provide their application with the gleam and velour that's required to get them noticed. The beauty of this is that there's no right or wrong answer. My endeavours, however, may be of use to you as a reader. Upon arriving at UEA, my first stumbling block was the lack of an effectively conveyed CV. I made this first on my list of priorities, and made two appointments in total at the UEA careers and employability building (adjacent to the library). The advisers were extremely useful, and I had an acceptable-looking CV within a fortnight.

My second priority, was investing my natural interest of things "Economics related" into a tangible, long-term project that looks good on a CV or Cover Letter. Given that I love to discuss (and moan) about Economic and Political issues, I thought it would be good to channel such discussion into a Blog. Similar useful investments in time may be setting up a Pressure Group, starting a Vlog, or applying for a post for some of the organisations that manage relations between students and the university (e.g. Student Unions). Most importantly, these activities have to reflect what you actually enjoy to get any long-term benefit from them, and can be as big, or little, as you choose.



As I started to get into the swing of the semester, I decided to set my sights on a University-related activity; perhaps in the form of a Staff-Student Liaison Officer or a Student Ambassador. I

always viewed a post at the Norwich Economic Papers to be something entirely out of reach for a first-year undergraduate. On the contrary, I decided to invest a lot of time in my application and try my luck. I think to be daring, or at least, have belief in oneself in attaining a particular goal is a trait common to many employable students.

My final endeavour was the desire to become proficient in at least one or two other languages, as I chose not to pursue language at A-level. Through basic demand and supply of labour, one can see that particular jobs in geographical regions are “competitive” because there is a large demand to possess that particular job in that area, for instance, an Investment Banking analyst post in London. In present day, language isn’t a barrier. People of different nationalities pass freely into different job markets in different countries; made possible by the fact that they possess more than one language. Whilst this isn’t an imperative, picking up a few languages over your time at university may broaden your career horizons beyond the UK. This is something that should be considered if you wish to apply for jobs in the Banking profession as an example, whilst it may involve working in a completely different country. This also looks great on your CV.

After putting all of these priorities together, I managed to formulate a fairly sound application for the “Talent Academy” at PriceWaterhouseCoopers. It’s essentially a Spring Insight week. I made it to the third stage which is essentially a phone interview, having had passed the online reasoning tests and application submission. Whilst I didn’t get onto the internship, my application was considered, suggesting that the ideas outlined above may be of use to you when preparing an application for an internship, or a similar post. Ultimately, your CV acts as a formalised, professional portrayal of yourself to

employers, and thus the ideas that encompass it must be organic, and from yourself.

### **Getting the most out of your course.**

In the ECO School, the very structure of courses provides willing students with transferrable, professional, and inter-personal skills that are highly sought after in the job market. No matter how accrued ones mathematical skill or analytical skill, I believe that a lack of the skills above will prevent a student from even getting his/her foot in the door during an application process for a highly competitive post. Gaining these employability enhancing skills is fairly straightforward, if you're dedicated to achieving them. I recommend trying to use Assessed Presentations, and Seminars to enhance your ability to formulate a well-balanced, coherent argument, or to build confidence in conveying your knowledge on a subject area to others. This may sound daunting, but putting the extra time into preparing for a presentation or seminar can be highly rewarding, not only in the form of high grades!

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